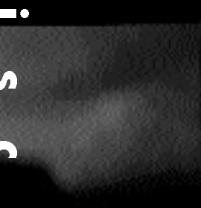


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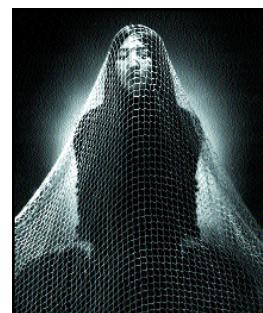
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Anatomy of A Magazine Staff

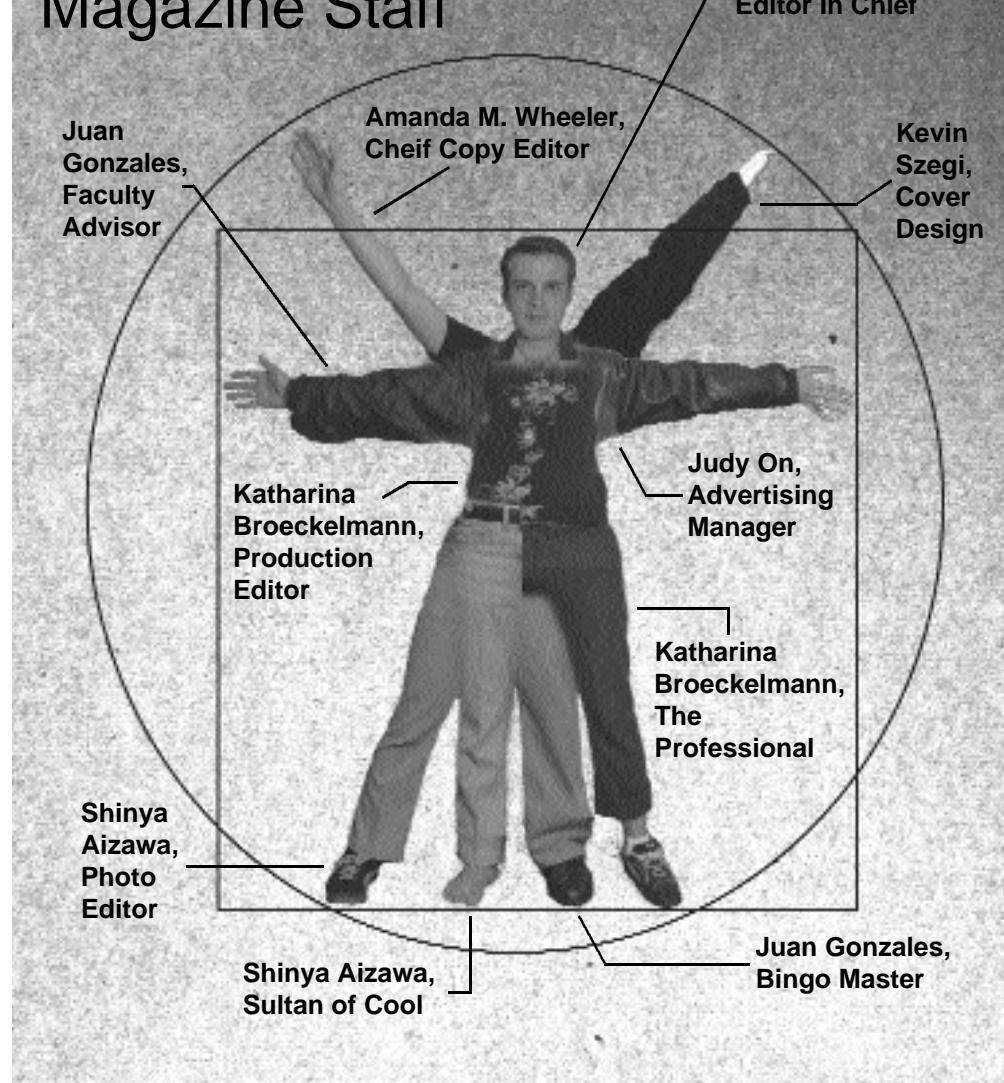


Photo illustration by
Anthony J. Gallela

POSTCARDS FROM NOJIRI-CHO



DEBBI GARDINER TAKES A GLIMPSE AT RURAL JAPAN
THROUGH THE EYES OF A NEW ZEALAND FEMINIST

For New Zealand college graduates, notorious for their wanderlust, a stint of teaching in Japan is as common as a Sunday lamb roast. The attraction is partly geographical - the countries are fairly close on the globe and both New Zealand and Japan are island communities. But in truth, New Zealander's and other Western travelers flock to Japan for the cash - most teaching jobs pay upwards of \$2,500 U.S. a month.

Joanna Blakemore, a recent graduate from a masters program in language teaching, saw teaching in Japan as a good career prospect, and an opportunity to pay off her looming student debt and a free ticket out of recession-hit New Zealand. While the teaching program prepped it's teachers on Japanese culture and working ethics, what this 29-year-old, vibrant, outdoor loving partying fiend had not banked on was what female Western residents refer to as the "emotional suicide" effect of Japan.

Because of a mutual fascination between Japanese women and Western men and a general reluctance for Japanese men to date Western women, the dating scene for Western women is rough in Japan.

What's more, Western woman can't help but feel peeved by Western men and their onslaught of Japanese suitors. The subsequent tension between the expatriate sexes only adds to the Western woman's despair. Ultimately, what Japan spells out for the heterosexual foreign lass is: A Romantic Wasteland. What's worse, away from the big cities, prospects for the love starved Western woman are even worse.

During her stay in the rural South of Japan, Blakemore shared with *etc.* how the first eight months of her teaching contract was panning out.

How would you describe your current surroundings?

Fairly rural with a population of 9,000 - about the size of where I grew up in New Zealand. Nojiri-cho is a village with no pubs, cafes or movie theatres. The rural landscape is pretty but interrupted by a highway running through the middle of the town. Large forested hills and rice fields surround me. Old women work hunched over stacking rice and planting crops by hand. This is an old town with many dilapidated buildings offering nothing in the way of a good social life.

Was there much of a



Blackmore at the Japanese Miyazaki Festival

learning the lingo, I have to rely on a dictionary to communicate; this becomes more work than fun.

Tell us a little about your work environment ...

The town-house where I work on Mondays is nothing more than a smokehouse with men chain-smoking cigarettes at their desks. The rest of the time I work at the base school: Nojiri Junior High School (300 students) and then Kamiya Junior High (90 students). People generally don't talk to me unless I first initiate [conversation]. A lot of [why people don't talk with me] is language barrier and my fault for not knowing Japanese better. I think that people here don't approach me because of feelings of embarrassment at their poor English ability.

There is also a fear of being different from the group. I often feel like an invisible mouse in the corner as many Japanese conversations fly around me. Sometimes I sit in my corner feeling alone - wanting to crawl under a rock.

**"CHILDREN SMILE
AND WAVE THINK-
ING YOU MIGHT BE
A MOVIE STAR. BE
PREPARED TO NOT
BLEND IN."**



Blackmore at a farewell dinner with grade three junior high students (age 15-16). The student to her right used to say "I love you, Joanna." The peace or victory sign is a common pose in Japan

culture shock when you arrived in Nojiri-cho?

No, not really. Because I had lived extensively in Europe before, moving from my comfort zone was not an issue. What I did find entertaining were all the formalities of Japan - like bowing to one another and women covering their mouths when they laugh. I was also struck by Japanese women's subservience - as shown by the women at my school serving tea to all their male colleagues. Also, the women at my school have large pieces of cardboard over their desks in an effort to stop men from looking at their legs as they work. I removed mine as I, personally, found it to be suppressing.

How is the social life in Nojiri-cho?

The warmer months are the best. I can go for bike rides in the countryside, take some photos and then come rest at home beside my cooling fan. On the weekends, life is a lot more social and fun. I generally meet up with my foreign [teaching] friends and we hit the biggest neighboring town - Miyazaki. Sometimes we go to the beach, rivers, visit the shrines or the hot springs and generally explore the South of Japan. Sometimes we just hang out in one of our flats and have dinner. During the week I invite [Japanese] female colleagues over for dinner, but seeing that I've been slacking on

dinner, but seeing that I've been slacking on

How are you received in Miyazaki? Are the locals friendly towards you?

Seeing that I am the only foreigner in Nojiri I am constantly on show. The children are the most curious and friendly - often waving at me and shouting hello and goodbye. Some days I don't mind but others this merely adds to my feeling of being nothing more than a freak show. Some ask me questions in Japanese like: why is my nose so large and am I married yet. I understand now why having red hair can be disadvantageous here.

Do you think that things would be easier if you were a Western bloke?

Nobody flirts, makes a move or gives you the eye here in rural Japan. Yes, I think my life would be a lot easier if I were male. All the foreign men I know get many invitations to things and seem to date Japanese women or have



Blackmore with a gaggle of grade three girls. The thumb's-up is a popular pose for photos in Japan

Insert: A visit to a kindergarten class produced this great pose

**"NOBODY FLIRTS,
MAKES A MOVE
OR GIVES YOU
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RURAL JAPAN.
YES, I THINK MY
LIFE WOULD BE A
LOT EASIER IF I
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Japanese girlfriends without a worry. As for me, no dates - ZERO! The Japanese colleague I liked, (Mr. Fushimi) neglected to tell me for seven months of a friendship that he had a girlfriend of years. Charming! Any interest I receive is most often only from foreign men, in a bar, in a larger city; or maybe a Japanese man who has returned from traveling from outside of Japan. Many Japanese men don't know how to relate as their only insight into western women is from the movies. They think we are all like the loose models they see in magazines. The porno industry has not helped our plight at all. Japanese men here either stare too long or run in the opposite direction. Either way, I know

cycle by while others ignore me. Children smile and wave thinking you might be a movie star. Be prepared to not blend in. There is no escape from how you look and people are going to point at you. I have heard that some English teachers in the countryside have nervous breakdowns, as coming here stirs up many inner feelings of grief. Be prepared to be alone and to see the real you.

With feelings of loneliness and your love life has taking a dive, why do you stay?

I recently renewed my contract with this school for another year, which brings the final day up to July 2000. This would be two years in total and would allow me to pay off all of my student debt in New Zealand. I don't want to stay any longer, as I will be ready to leap into the real world again by then - to speak my mother tongue, to be more social. While there are many a lonely moment here in Nojiri-cho, I feel that if you can survive an experience of isolation and loneliness, it creates a stronger sense of self, leading to personal growth and personal development. There is a phrase frequently used in Japanese, "ganbatte" - this suggests, chin up, be strong, good luck and fight. Some students have said this to me if I look sad or tired. I'm really trying to live this though. Loneliness and isolation, although they may sound negative in connotation, actually shed clarity of mind and heart. This is proving to be an insightful time for me. Having said that, if things get really bad, I will bail.

that they assume that because I am a Western woman I am highly sexed and aggressive to boot. The women are much friendlier towards me. Again, I acknowledge the fact that if I spoke fluent Japanese my life may be a bit easier however my motivation to study fluctuates depending on my attitude towards Japanese society.

What are some of the bonuses of your lifestyle and some of the drawbacks?

The bonuses are definitely getting to explore my creativity. There is a hands-on arts center just twenty minutes from here that keeps me sane. The photographic opportunities here are superb. Also positive is having a surplus of cash in my wallet for shopping and travel. The drawbacks would be feeling confined at times, not having a very regular social life (there are days where I have complete isolation from other Westerners and this can be a bit lonely), and the "introspectiveness" that comes from this.

Any advice to offer entrepreneurial Western women wanting to work in the quieter regions of Japan?

Be prepared for a variety of responses. Some locals offer me cheery smiles as I



Blackmore talking to her students in the classroom.



Photo by Shinya Aizawa

When it comes to electing the best taqueria in San Francisco, one immediately runs into trouble. The problem is that everyone has their own criteria. While one person may judge on freshness of ingredients and tasty meats, another may decide solely on price. But on one thing there is no argument: The best place to find the best taqueria is in the Mission district. On every block you're likely to come across a hopping taqueria booming with Latin music and a line of hungry folks itching to get their hands on big fat burrito. The following list is in no way exhaustive, but rather a sampling of a few spots that often come up in conversation when the talk is on yummy eats from south of the border.

Taqueria Cancun

Taqueria Cancun, located on Mission between 18th and 19th streets, is the perfect spot to eat that late night burrito smothered

The taqueria, home of the super burrito, a San Francisco staple. We've all had one or two ... dozen ... a week (a day for some of you). But where do you go when you want a really good burrito ... when you want the best?

Evan Ross

answers this question by listing the four best taquerias in San Francisco.*

with gangster appeal. Open until 12:30 a.m. during the week and close to 2:00 a.m. Friday and Saturday nights, Cancun serves up tasty burritos at dirt cheap prices. The interior's red-painted bricks and the colorful banners hanging from the wooden cross-

beams set the stage for an authentic taqueria experience. Walk past the rough looking youngsters out front dressed in Dallas Cowboys regalia, and you enter a busy world where the juke box booms out the latest in Mexican tunes, and hungry bar hoppers and locals alike are chowing down on good cheap eats. Nothing costs over \$5.00 at Cancun, and for much less you can gorge yourself on a variety of lard filled pleasures. Hip Mission vegetarians flock to Cancun for the veggie burrito, and for \$2.75, it comes with ample amounts of avocado, fresh salsa, cilantro, onions, and a token dollop of sour cream (a crime in my book). Place your order next to the garlic bulb strings and vases of fresh carnations, and grab a seat at one of the long wooden picnic style tables. The service is friendly and fast, and finding a place to sit down is not a problem even at peak hours.

We ordered the veggie burrito, regular nachos (\$2.75), and an Al Pastor (barbecued

*Okay, this is only Evan's opinion, and you might have a different opinion, but no letters, please. Use the time it would take to write a letter and go have a yummy burrito – Ed.



pork) super burrito (the mysterious price of \$3.88). Unfortunately, the chips are pre-fab from the box. The regular nachos come on a big plate, with tons of melted white cheese, refried beans, and sliced jalapenos. The beans quickly sog up the chips, which may not be that big a deal if you've got a big hunger. Generous slices of jalapenos scattered on top give a nice kick to this simple dish. While the nachos were only so-so, the burritos are anything but. The tortilla is

thinner than at most places, and they toast them crispy on the grill before wrapping up all the goodies. The veggie burrito came piping hot, the aluminum wrap burning my girl-friend's eager hands. Though the pinto beans lack flavor, the super fresh salsa (heavy on the cilantro and onion) make up for this. The cheese, melted evenly throughout, makes for a nice gooey presence in every bite (good cheese distribution). The absence of a sour cream kick is disappointing, but I guess you

can always ask for extra. Al pastor fans won't be disappointed with Cancun's presentation. The barbecue sauce hot and tangy, with a little bit of a kick. Of course, like all al pastores, Cancun's is a bit greasy, but not overly so like some places. The pork juice mixes with the cheese and the toasty tortilla, making for a big flavor punch. Yum! Saddle up to your burrito with an absurdly inexpensive beer (domestic \$1.35, Imported \$1.85), or one of the fresh agua frescas (natural fruit drinks), and you're set for a good cheap meal.

El Farolito

Ten steps north of the 24th Street BART stop, This Mission Street taqueria keeps the doors open until 2:00 a.m. every night of the week, and for good reason. The narrow entrance hugs the long counter on one side where all cooking and chopping is going on, and on the other side are blue metal tables with McDonalds style undetachable yellow chairs. The ambiance doesn't count for much here, but the good eats, relatively cheap price, and a friendly crew are the real draw. The loud music make it easy to relax as the line snakes up to the register.

Farolito does a number of things well. We ordered the Cebollitas (green onions, \$1.10), the super burrito with Carnitas (crispy pork chunks, \$3.65), and the vegetarian super quesadilla suiza (also \$3.65). The cebollitas are such a basic dish, yet so delicious, that you'd think you could go home and make them yourself. You can't. The secret lies in the grill. The tons and tons of yummy fat chunks melted over the years have created a film that gives this dish its secret ingredient. The green onions (scallions where I come from) are generously doused with oil and salt, and tossed on the grill. That's it. The crispy charred ends melt in the mouth. The white bulb is sweet and chewy, and with lime juice squeezed on top, this dish is sublime. The quesadilla suiza is like a burrito, but comes flattened instead of round, and it's cooked on the grill after it is already wrapped up. What you get is a hot wrap that should really be eaten with a fork and knife. But forget about it; we're talking taqueria eating here. Inside is a super generous serving of huge chunks of avocado, sour cream, rice, salsa, and cheese. To eat the super quesadilla is to experience honest to goodness taqueria chemistry. The tortilla melts the cheese, which heats the sour cream, which in turn pulls in the rice, and so on down the line. A must try.

Farolito's carnitas are good, but not great. Like the quesadilla, the burrito's chemistry is good, but the meat is lacking. Instead of the big chunks of crispy pork you usually find in well-made carnitas, El Farolito's are stewed and jerky. They are good, but not exactly the real McKoy. The

burrito is packed tight with lots of stuff and a delicious mouthful of sour cream in every bite. There are two salsas to choose from, and both are excellent. The tomato salsa is chopped up fine with a big onion-cilantro kick. The green salsa is made from avocado, and a perfect topping for the folks who can't take too much heat. The chips, like Cancun, are pre-fab, and do not stand alone.

Pancho Villa

This is my friend Anthony's favorite taqueria; and not without good reason. The food there is very good and Pancho Villa has got to be the cleanest taco joints in the known universe. Their menu is astounding – it rivals sit-down Mexican restaurants with its selection, while maintaining the air and presentation of a taqueria. So what's the problem? As well as being the cleanest, and possibly the tastiest, it's also the most expensive.

That said, the high prices don't stop people from lining up for Pancho Villa munchies all day long. Don't let the long lines scare you, however, the Pancho Villa staff is numerous and speedy. It takes only a minute and 10 seconds longer to receive your order at Pancho Villa during the lunch-time rush than it does at your average taqueria. (Yes, exhaustive studies were done to come up with that statistic.) You can get in line on 16th Street between Valencia and Mission Streets.

Pancho Villa has super burritos at \$5.52, a full \$2.00 more than most taquerias (but, mmmmm, it's good). Things to look for on the menu are the baby burrito (\$2.95), the chipotle prawns (\$8.95) and their impressive aguas frescas that come in seven flavors and four sizes topping out at \$2.35. The best dish on the menu is the tequila prawns plate (\$7.95). It comes packed with rice, beans and the like with prawns sautéed in some really yummy green stuff ... and tequila.

Maya Taqueria

Left out for space reasons (and because I was too busy eating burritos to write another review) Maya deserves to be mentioned for their delicious Axteca burrito and for being one of the only places in town you can get refried black beans (rather than whole beans).

La Taqueria

I often ask myself a hypothetical question. Which gift would I rather choose? A) Airfare to Las Vegas with front row seats to Sigfreid and Roy. B) Bleacher seats to a Cardinals game. C) Carnitas tacos for a week from La Taqueria. There's no question. C is for Carnitas. C is for colossal. C is for champion. When La Taqueria opened doors in 1973, they chose the perfect name. Imagine "The restaurant", or "The Supermarket".

They took the general and turned it into the pinnacle.

The tall palm tree out front hides the entrance which is pushed back to make room for outdoor tables and a small tiled counter with cozy black-cushioned stools. While the food at La Taqueria is a true pleasure to eat, some get a serious case of sticker shock the first time they go. Tacos start out at \$2.50 and burritos at \$4.00, but they don't include much. The veggie burrito comes with beans, cheese, and salsa. That's it. Ask for rice at La Taqueria and you're likely to be told that "rice comes from China". The point is that La Taqueria deals with only the most authentic ingredients. Price quickly climbs as you begin to add your favorite fix'ins, but it's worth every penny.

I ordered what I always do, two dorado tacos with carnitas with everything on top (\$3.85 each, ouch). The everything is cheese, guacamole, sour cream, hot sauce, and salsa. When you order the taco dorado, they take one of the two tortillas and toss it on the grill to make it golden crispy. The cheese is tossed on and melted. The result is a flavor punch that has an immeasurable amount of chemistry. The soft tortilla makes up the outside shell, and as you bite through the taco, your mouth goes through a thousand different sensations. Starting with the soft warmth of the first layer and then to the crunch of the second, this is where the fun begins. The dorado taco is a non-stop eating pleasure. The melted cheese hits your tongue with the savory meat and cold sour cream. The gua-

camole seeps in, then the kick of the salsa, and finally the hot sauce. Every flavor is distinct, every bite has perfect chemistry, and the green hot sauce is spicy and addictive. La Taqueria's carnitas are a gift from the gods. These succulent chunks with crispy corners and hot sweet centers beg to be devoured. The chips are delicious homemade creations and come with a gigantic serving of salsa, but they cost \$1.10. They are crispy and light; the salsa mild and fresh. Whoever said that the best things in life are free never ate at La Taqueria. Wash down your prize winning taco or burrito with a selection of eight kinds of agua fresca or twelve flavors of beer (domestic \$1.60, imported \$2.50). La Taqueria is the place to go when you want to feel happy.

The People's Choice

Before writing this article, I made a faulty assumption. I figured when most people choose a favorite taqueria, they think only of location. That is, how close the taqueria is to home. I was mistaken. Through a very unscientific survey made through the Internet, I discovered that not only will people travel great distances to feast at their favorite spot, but also that price has very little to do with the equation. With this, I wish happy taqueria hunting to all, and to all a hearty "buen provecho."

(Editors note: Shannon Raider and Anthony J. Gallela contributed to this article.)



Photo by Michael Kushner

North: A Long, Strange Trip



Russell Gammon has an adventure that shapes his life

It was raining.

A friend had just dropped me off under a bridge on route 25, a few miles north of Cheyenne, Wyoming. Sheltered from the rain, I watched as he drove back South toward what had been home. I was suddenly overwhelmed with the unsureness of my position, the uncertainties of tomorrow. Five years after arriving in Colorado, I was leaving in the same manner as I had come: With nothing but a backpack full of personal belongings and \$80 dollars to sustain me on my journey to Alaska. Somehow, it seemed fitting.

My dog, Hymie, who had been my companion for the past 14 years, shivered beside me from the chill, and I knew that the enormity of my decision would affect him as well as myself in the time to come. Hardship meant little to me, but he made our future welfare a responsibility that rested heavily on my shoulders. I had options. His only choice was the desire to be with me.

A large truck pulling a 60 foot camper trailer pulled up beside me. The man behind the wheel leaned over and asked if I had a driver's license. I didn't, mine had expired a few months back, but ready to move on down the road, I lied and said, "Yes, I have a license."

The man, Jim, explained that he was from Kansas headed to Kalispell, Montana to deliver the trailer. He had been traveling since Saturday morning (this being noon Sunday), and needed to have the trailer at its destination by seven Monday morning. He picked me up because he was desperate for sleep and needed someone to give him a break from behind the wheel.

After the brief explanation of how to switch to the reserve gas tanks, Jim pulled over and let me drive. I pulled out onto route 25 headed north through the mountains. It was madness; one minute I was standing in the cold rain hitchhiking, the next I was racing through a downpour with a purpose, a deadline to meet on the other end. I marveled with wonder that John Steinbeck had been right, "You didn't take a trip, a trip took you."

Jim and Hymie were laying down behind my right shoulder in the sleeper bed. I was alone, listening the radio. I could see less than a dozen yards ahead of me because of the buckets of rain exploding



Hymie

off the windshield. I was in the left-hand lane of a two-lane highway with a car to my right and slightly ahead of me. I was positioned to pass but hesitated. The water from the car's tires was a waterfall landing on the truck's hood. I couldn't see and was worried both about hydroplaning and my unfamiliarity with driving such a big rig.

Jim, sensing my uncertainty, raised himself high enough to see and told me to go ahead. I did, forging blindly through the rain alongside the car, not knowing if another car would come barreling down on us, and sighed with relief on the other side when we emerged successfully.

My plan was to go up route 15 through Montana into Canada. I wanted to hitch along the Al/Can Highway of which I had heard many tales. But when I studied the map, I realized I could go with Jim as far as Kalispell, check out Glacier National Park, then either cross over the mountains of the park into Canada, or continue across on Route 2 to where it intersected at 15. There I could get back on my original route to the Canadian border and beyond.

The next morning we made it to Kalispell where Jim bought us breakfast (he had bought Hymie and me all of our meals thus far). We had traveled 900 miles since yesterday afternoon! Not a bad start really, and I had yet to spend a dime of my small hoard of cash.

It took all day to hitch the few short miles to Glacier National Park. We had only one ride that day and the beer the driver offered me was a small consolation. Despite this setback, we arrived at the park before dusk. I soon discovered that the road through the mountains was still covered in snow and impractical to attempt going over on foot. I set up my tent just inside the boundaries of the park on the other side of the river. I was worried about the presence of grizzlies, which were as thick as fleas on a dog, and concerned that Hymie would act stupid if confronted with one. Fortunately my fears were unfounded; we survived the night.

The next morning



Russell Gammon



Portage Glacier, Alaska

found us again on Route 2, which headed East along a river. We soon caught a ride through the Blackfoot Indian Reservation to where it connected with Route 15, at Shelby.

A strange phenomena occurred during that ride. The road was covered with thousands of baby prairie dogs who had panicked in the face of approaching cars. They ran back and forth across the road, many of them being killed in the process. The vehicle I was in killed dozens. There was no way to avoid them. As we left their crushed bodies behind us to carpet the street, I wondered if the evolution of nature took such slaughter into account when determining if a species survives.

My ride dropped me off in Shelby, then I caught another ride north. The country of that area consisted of rolling plains made of short grass. I expected it to be farm or ranch country, and some of it was, or at least it had been. Now, as far as the eye could see, the horizon was covered with hundreds and hundreds of small windmills. One benefit of hitchhiking is that your driver is usually a local and often can supply answers to your questions during the course of a ride. Many people who pick you up make good tour guides. My ride explained that each windmill, on an average, will produce about a barrel of oil a day, but if you add all the barrels together it adds up to a substantial amount. And unlike livestock, you don't need to feed windmills with anything but the wind.

It took six different rides and half a day to reach the Canadian border. My last ride pulled into the border crossing on the Canadian side. A guard questioned us and I discovered I had a lot to learn. The first mistake I made was not choosing the same destination as my driver. If I had he might have waved us through. My dog was in the back seat mostly hidden by a suit hanging from a hook behind the drivers seat, and went unnoticed at first by the guard. Upon further questioning he discovered I was hitchhiking, and as he told us to pull over, he noticed my dog. That pretty much determined that I would not be allowed into Canada.

I went inside the building as ordered and waited for my turn to be questioned. He asked me if I had ever been arrested. I lied and said no. Wrong answer. He had already run my name through the computer and confronted me about a drug charge I had on my record from nine years earlier. That was one strike against me because Canada wasn't letting people with misdemeanors into the country. I only had the \$80 I had started with on me and he told me I needed \$250 before I would be allowed into the country. Strike two. My dog was strike three because I didn't have the proper veterinary paper work proving he had his shots.

As I walked back across no-man's land toward the United States border I worried whether the U.S. would let me back into the country. I imagined myself stranded for infinity between the two countries.

I went into the U.S. border building and stood aside as my pack was emptied and searched. The cop behind the counter took my wallet, and on discovering a Louisiana University ID belonging to an ex-girlfriend of mine, he disappeared with it into another room. I waited impatiently as the sun slowly set on my third day on the road.

Eventually the man behind the counter returned, and in an attempt to lighten the

mood, I jokingly asked him if he had found out that my girlfriend was married. He put on a serious demeanor and told me he was just checking to see that she was still alive. I shut-up, thankful that nothing had happened to her since I had last seen her. She had given me that ID as a remembrance of her over a pizza and beer after a romantic weekend of hiking and cross-country skiing. One day my sentimentality would get me into serious trouble.

Finally, they allowed me to pass back into the U.S. Night was settling in and the rain was beginning again. I climbed a hill in sight of the border crossing and set-up my tent in a hurry. Hymie and I

crawled in, and after putting all my cloths into a plastic trash bag, we settled into my down sleeping bag. By then it was pouring rain. There was no holding it back; a river of water cascaded through my tent. My sleeping bag was soon saturated and it was then I made a new discovery: even when goose down is soaked through and through, it still retains a person's body heat. Although I was uncomfortably wet, I wasn't cold. I remained that way for two nights and a day. The rain refused to let up and there was nothing to do but endure the discomfort until it did.

On the second morning, the rain slacked off and I broke camp, packing everything up and heading back down route 15. I decided I would go to the capital of Montana, Helena, where I could get a hot meal. We hadn't eaten in two days, and in Helena I could dry my sleeping bag, which soaking

wet probably weighed a hundred pounds. I caught a ride into Helena and after doing laundry, I hiked through town and along a canyon rim where I found a secluded place to pitch my tent. Then, with my dog for company, I headed into town for a beer.

The first bar I arrived at was a small dive. I tied my dog with a tent rope to a parking meter and entered what turned out to be a small party of locals getting drunk on cheap beer. At \$.60 a draw and \$2.50 a pitcher, beer was flowing around the room like water, with

everyone generously filling each other's glasses. The bar was overrun with dogs. I hesitated for a moment with the idea of letting my dog come in. I couldn't be sure he would behave so I postponed making a decision for the moment and figured I would case the joint first.

Behind the bar was a Blackfoot Indian bartender named John and seated next to me were a couple of Blackfeet, both of whom were well along toward getting drunk. I ordered a pitcher, it being the better buy, and settled in to have a look around. The three Blackfeet and I shared drinks and I asked the bartender if he knew of any printing jobs in the neighborhood. I needed to work when I could along the way to help supplement my small bankroll. John, to my surprise, told me one of his customers did work for a print shop and gave me a note of introduction.

One of the Indians staggered off his stool, and after saying good-bye, stumbled to the door and left. A moment later he stuck his head back into the room and yelled, "Here's another one!" and who should come flying through the door but Hymie. The Indian had cut his rope.

I watched my dog run around the room with the other dogs,



A sunset over Cook Inlet, Alaska



Known as the Alaska range, the expanse that covers hundreds of miles in Alaska can be as beautiful as it is unforgiving.

then promptly lift his leg and piss on the pool table leg. Silently, I groaned. I had known he wouldn't behave himself. To my surprise everybody just laughed.

The Blackfoot I was sitting with slowly appraised my dog, then shrugged and said, "He's kind of small and scrawny, but I would eat him." Then he explained that Blackfeet eat dogs. John, not to be outdone, asked me, "What do you call a Blackfoot with several dogs?" I shrugged. John replied, "A rancher."

The next morning I met Judy at the print shop, which turned out to be a publishing company who jobbed their printing out to South Korea. Fortunately they were moving to a more spacious office and needed help moving furniture, and for the next week that's what I did.

After a week of hard, hot work, I decided it was time to continue on my way. I collected my check (a mere \$200.00 take home), packed my tent and gear, and Hymie and I headed south on Route 15. The first

day we didn't get far, but the next morning I caught a ride to Butte, Montana, and then a second ride to Seattle, Washington. I called some friends and spent the next week with them while I worked out the plane trip to Anchorage, Alaska.

I arrived in Anchorage on the longest day of the year. After collecting my dog at the baggage carousel, I headed outside to get my first view of this isolated part of our country commonly referred to as "The Last Frontier." From the airport I couldn't see much.

It was late in the day so I wasted no time heading in the direction of town. After about a hundred yards of hiking I entered a dense thicket growing alongside the road and beat my way deep into its interior where I could pitch my tent. Tomorrow would be soon enough to head south down Hyway 1 to Homer, a fishing community where a friend's uncle worked a fishing boat. I intended to hit him up for a job. Here it was June and already very late in the season for salmon, but I had \$32 to my name and needed to find work as soon as possible.

The sun never set! For an hour in the early morning hours it was dusk, then the sun popped back up over the horizon as if trying to



Eagles having a snack on the Homer Spit

surprise us. In the thicket where I pitched my tent the mosquitoes numbered in the millions and Hymie and I were forced to hide in my sleeping bag to escape their vicious, blood-crazed attacks.

The following morning saw us on the road hitchhiking in a southerly direction. We quickly received a ride from three soldiers stationed at Fort Richardson. They were only going a short distance to a bar called the Bird House, but on arriving we found the bar closed, which really wasn't so surprising since it was only mid-morning.

I did get to see The Bird House later in the summer. Some friends and I went up to Anchorage and stopped in on the way. It was an unusual bar that sank into the ground on one side during an earthquake. Built of logs, one side of the building was ten feet high while the opposite end tapered down to six feet. The floor inside was dirt, and the bar slanted at such an angle that stops had been placed periodically along the length of the bar to keep drinks from sliding onto the floor. Tree stumps were used for stools and they too started at four feet at one end of the bar and were probably only a foot and a half at the other. The bar was known for its spicy pickles, which the bartender claimed were pickled in Wolverine

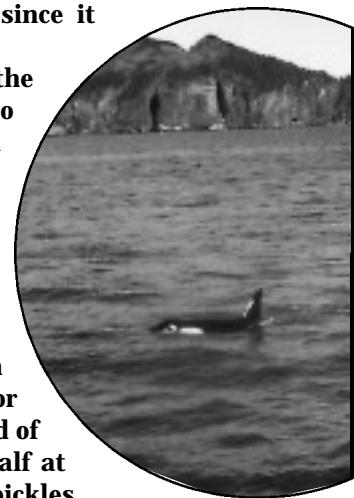
hormone juice and a customer could buy one for a quarter. If you could eat the pickle, which was only two inches long, without pausing from the heat of the spices, the bartender gave you your quarter back. Very few customers have had their quarters returned to them. Unfortunately, I've heard that The Bird House has burnt down since I was there; you can only visit its rubble now.

Another driver picked me up and dropped me off where the Old Seward highway and the Sterling highway merge. The Seward Highway climbs over Moose Pass and continues into Seward. The Sterling Highway moves through Soldotna and ends at Homer, according to the map.

Luckily it was a very beautiful day because nobody would stop for me. I hiked along the road until I came to a dirt road where several cars were turning to go to a lake for fishing and boating. I thought this might be a good place to "homestead" and catch a ride. I settled down beside the turnoff and kept my thumb out in the air. One driver who turned in stopped and explained he couldn't give me a ride, but would give me a cold beer to help beat back the heat. I would have been foolish to refuse such an offer.

I had no sooner worked the cap off the bottle with my knife than a ride pulled up alongside me and told me to hop in. I threw my dog in the back of the pickup and we were off. It turned out the driver needed help with a keg of beer he had just bought and he told me that if I gave him a hand getting the keg into the lake behind his house, he would give me a ride into Soldotna.

True to his word, he



A killer whale in Resurrection Bay, Seward, Alaska



Dall sheep – an ewe and a lamb – on the Seward Highway, south of Anchorage on the Turnagain Arm



The Homer Spit, reaching out into Kachemak Bay from Homer, Alaska

dropped me on the opposite side of Soldotna and I stuck out my thumb yet again. There were no more rides that day, and when I finally decided to give up and looked at my watch, I was surprised to see that it was almost 11 p.m. I laughed. Without the sun setting there was no way to keep track of time. Normally I would have quit and set-up camp at dusk.

I started early the next morning and caught a ride with a fisherman pulling a small boat. He turned at Anchor's Point and I caught another ride shortly afterward to Homer.

Homer is a small rustic community of expatriates, or hippies, if you will. Jewel, the musician, is from Homer, and Tom Bodgett of Motel 6 fame also resides there. His books of the colorful characters housed in the community are well worth reading. They will have you laughing to yourself all the way through.

Looking at the map, I had thought that Homer was the end of the road, but on arrival I discovered that there was a sandbar that extended out into the ocean forming a small sheltered cove on one side. The sandbar is known as The Spit and is connected to the mainland with a bridge. Asking around, I soon learned that any work there might be would be found on The Spit.

I hiked across the bridge and along the road, which ran down the middle of The Spit's entire length, with beaches extending on both sides. Three-quarters of the way out, there was a old light house that had been turned into a fisherman's bar called the Salty Dog. I pitched my tent on the beach opposite the bar and went in to spend some of my dwindling cash; I ordered a beer and relaxed. I had finally arrived after more than three weeks of hitching and traveling across country from Colorado. A man entered and sat down next to me. By then I was working on a cup of coffee; I had a beer appetite, but a coffee purse, I needed to find work.

I learned from the man that there was a fishermen's strike going on and that the season, which normally would have been well along by this time, hadn't even started yet, and may not even begin. He also explained that he had just quit his job processing halibut for sport fishing boats. The Spit had only one cannery, and the process-

ing plant he had worked at vacuum packed the fish tourists caught so they could take the meat home on the plane without it spoiling. Other than the sport fishing boats, there was a fleet of commercial fishing boats that worked out of Homer. I also discovered that my friend's uncle had sold his boat and shipped his family to Seattle. It looked like hard times ahead.

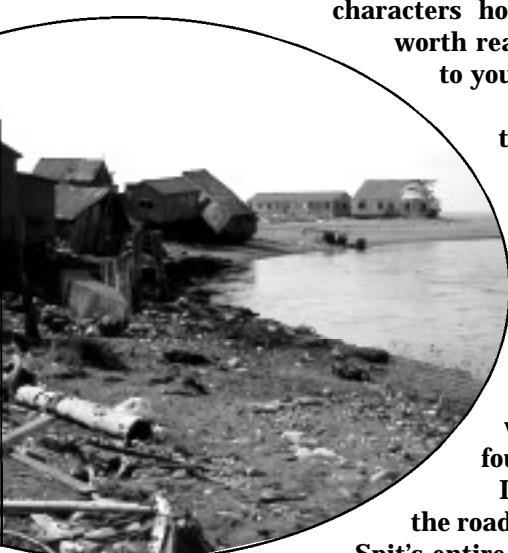
The man gave me the name of his boss, Julie, and told me to look her up and explain that I was going to replace him for the job. I asked him why he would give up one of the few jobs available. He told me he wasn't making the money he had envisioned, and looking off into the distance across the ocean, and told me of Dutch Harbor. He explained that it was like the old boomtowns of the gold rushes, and was just as tough. The Elbow Room, a legendary bar in Dutch Harbor, was reputed to be one of the toughest places left on earth, where brawls and knife fights were a nightly occurrence.

Dutch Harbor is located on an island, Unalaska, part of the Aleutian Islands chain which extends toward Russia. In the winter the place comes alive as all the fishermen risk their lives to harvest the crab from the Bering Seas. Each season sees the death of some of them. At the beginning of the season the jobs are filled with experienced fishermen, but half way through the season there are always plenty of vacancies due to death, injury, or hands that just can't take the brutal, inhuman pace and quit.

Leaving the Salty Dog, I decided my first course of action was to see about the processing job with Julie, but when I met her she wasn't too hip on the idea. Looking down at my feet she asked where my rubber boots were. My first lesson in cannery work. Everyone needs to wear rubber boots because a lot of water flows on the floor of these plants during processing. She told me to come back after I got some footwear. I didn't have the money necessary to buy any, but had noticed some old boat wrecks half buried in the beach. Searching through the hold of one of them I found a pair of old boots that definitely leaked, but I used plastic bags for socks and suffered the discomfort of wet, cold feet when I finally did get a job; not working for Julie, however.



A hanging glacier at Kenai Fiord National Park, Alaska



An old cannery in Karluk Village on Kodiak Island, Alaska



Bear Glacier at Kenai Fiord National Park, Seward, Alaska



An old, still active cannery in Lousen Bay, on Kodiak Island, Alaska. The man is unidentified

I discovered she had hired someone else while I was gone. I wasn't really surprised. I hung out on The Spit for a few more days, then decided I would backtrack to Kenai where rumor had it there was work in several of the canneries. I learned that the rumors were just that, rumors. Hundreds of college students were in the same boat as myself, no work and little, if any cash. Everybody was camping out, either in their vehicles or in tents alongside the canneries in designated areas.

A few more days and another rumor floated around; there was cannery work ten miles north, in the small community of Nikiski. I hurriedly hitchhiked out there to the one cannery in Nikiski, Cook Inlet Processing, and inquired for work. The personal director told me to pitch my tent in the woods, in what they called Tent City, where two hundred college students had already set-up camp. They assured me we would be working soon.

The recreation room was open and free coffee and hot chocolate was plentiful. We spent the time playing Ping-Pong while we idly waited for the fishermen and canneries to resolve the dispute over the price of the salmon. No one had money, or food. The community was good enough to pass out food. They understood perfectly well that without the migratory workers the economy would collapse. The locals had no desire to do the hard work of processing salmon.

Then one day it happened, Cook Inlet shipped pink salmon from the southeast part of Alaska by tender, 250,000 pounds at a time, and we were working non-stop 24 hours a day.

The average cannery worker makes \$6 an hour. Where you make your money is in the overtime. The object is to quickly get your forty hours the first two days, then after that the rest is gravy.

Here's how processing works: The salmon are put into a hopper at the head of the line. A number of them are released from the hopper onto a table where two workers flip all the fish in a line, all facing the same way. The next stage are the pinners. Ideally there are four of them, but usually the line is short handed and there are only two. The pinners set the pace and receive an extra dollar an hour to compensate for the responsibility and the difficulty of the job. They slip the fish's gill onto a pin that holds the fish steady while it moves through the header.



A brown bear foraging in the Karluk River, Kodiak Island, Alaska

The header automatically cuts the head off the fish, then pushes it out onto a table where a worker picks up the fish so it stands on its belly, then slides the fish onto a metal rod (referred to as reaming). Two belts grip the fish on either side and move it forward into a machine that slits the belly of the fish open. The fish carcass is pushed out onto another table while the guts and salmon eggs are diverted to a table on the side. A crew at the sidetable puts the eggs into baskets and the guts into a big metal bin. The eggs are processed into roe (caviar) by a trained Japanese crew. The Japanese buy all the roe. The guts are sold for fertilizer. The heads of the fish are ejected into another metal bin. They will be sold to a dog food company.

The remainder of the fish ends up on a table where workers make sure any of the guts left on the fish are removed, referred to as spooning because the tool they use for this is shaped like a spoon that ejects a stream of water which helps with the rinsing. The workers hands freeze from handling the fish, which have been sitting on ice, and periodically they need to soak their hands in boiling water. It has been suggested that freezing and thawing your hands over long periods of times like this could encourage arthritis. True or not, the cannery workers voiced concern for their health. Another legitimate fear was getting tendinitis from the continual repetitive motion of the work. I developed tendinitis after hours and hours of reaming fish. Believe me when I tell you this infliction is very painful.

The fish are then passed down the line where they are rinsed, graded for quality, then thrown on a rack which, when full, will be wheeled into a huge walking freezer. The cannery workers affectionately call this entire process "the slime line."

Roughly six hours later the fish, now frozen, are wheeled out of the freezer into what is called "glazing" at C.I.P. Other canneries refer to this part of the process as "fresh/frozen." In this area the frozen fish are coated with a sugar glaze to retard freezer burn, then they are boxed and loaded into trailers where they will be picked up for shipping.

After the first six hours of processing both areas work in tandem. They require full crews processing an average of 15 thousand pounds per hour around the clock.

The other part of cannery work is the camp life. Since there is no



Mount McKinley, Alaska (way off in the distance) can be seen from hundreds of miles away

... Tent City, where two hundred college students had already set-up camp. They assured me we would be working soon.



The Village of Karluk, Alaska is a typical looking Alaskan village

way to secure tents while you are working, you form small groups with other workers you meet and make friends with.

Below my camp were the two college boys from Iowa. Above and to the right of me was Paul from New Jersey with a friend of his. To the left of Paul's camp were four college students from Missoula, Montana. They lost one of their mates down at Homer when he and a friend got drunk at the Salty Dog, then borrowed a canoe and paddled out into the ocean. The canoe tipped over and only one of the two made it to shore. Nature in Alaska is unforgiving. One of the local woman I worked with at the cannery lost her husband when he and a mate went fishing. They never returned and to this day no one knows what happened. It is assumed they are dead. The locals are adamant that if you go into the woods, always carry a shotgun in case you run into a grizzly. In this northern country you learn to live with nature as a companion. It's either that, or you don't survive; some lucky ones just leave.

Directly next to my camp was one of my best friends of the summer, Rafael, who was from Honduras. I sought out Rafael deliberately because he was the only person from a Spanish culture working for C.I.P. I had a long-time passion for anything south of the border. I had a trip planned to follow the Gringo Trail through Mexico, Central America and into South America. I came to Alaska to see and understand the world, and to make the money to finance the trip. Together, Rafael and I would suffer hard times, and even harder work. We would get drunk together, and after closing the bar at five in the morning, we would lay back on the ground and watch the northern lights (Aurora Borealis) while we discussed philosophy and the differences between our cultures. We would both fall in love with different women that summer, and later in the fall I would foolishly get married. Rafael would be one of the four people at my wedding.

She was Switz and has since gone back to her homeland. I was to join her there, but instead I received a Dear John letter and I haven't seen her since ... even though we are still married. But that's a different story.

We worked through the summer until the salmon ran out and everybody scattered back to the "Lower Forty-Eight," or the "Outside" as Alaskans call the continental U.S. A small crew of us remained to help with the Halibut season which lasted about a week. Then there was a short break before Herring season so I hitchhiked north through Anchorage to Denali (Mt. McKinley) National Park to meet my girlfriend for a week of camping.

When I returned to the cannery and entered the woods that had held so much life and living that summer, a feeling of sadness descended over me at the emptiness of the woods. I saw only one tent where a few weeks ago there were a hundred. It was like returning to your home town after an extended journey only to find the town empty of life.

I dropped my pack on the ground and went across the street to check my post office box. When I returned it was to discover my friend Rafael taking down the lone tent. Suddenly I didn't feel so melancholy.

He explained that the boss at C.I.P. was allowing him to move into one of the trailers that had been used by management during the summer. He said I was welcome to join him. I helped him pack up and we went over to the trailer together. It was tiny and all the windows had been broken, but on entering we discovered it had two bunks with one inch foam pads (luxury after sleeping on the hard ground for several months) and that it had electricity and a small space heater that actually worked.

Rafael made the brilliant discovery that if you turned the heater onto its side, we could boil a kettle of water on it. I made coffee from the hot water and sat down at the table to write a letter to a friend. Rafael sat down on the bottom bunk and was listening to a tape his father had sent him from Honduras. After months of camping, we discovered ourselves rolling in luxury.

The late western writer, Louis L'Amour, wrote "the hardships of today are only a breathe away from the pleasures of tomorrow, and those pleasures are all the more so because of this which we have endured." I have discovered that anyone can take the good times, but it's the hard times that bring you closer in touch with yourself and lends a greater understanding of this person who is you.

Unexpectedly, Rafael laughed out loud, interrupting me as I attempted to put my thoughts on paper. "Russell, this song is about us," he said. I looked at him questioningly as he explained. It was a song by Vincente Fernandez, titled "El Rey," and Rafael interpreted,

"With money, or without money,

I always do what I want.

I don't have a throne, or a queen,
or anyone who understands me.

Yet, I am still King."

As I turned away from Rafael and looked around our small trailer kingdom, I realized that it was true, for this moment in time, at least, that we were indeed Kings.

After Alaska I ... well I haven't made it to Mexico yet, but I've had more adventures. I'll save those for the next article.



Russel's possessions, including photographs of his trip, were stolen shortly after he moved to San Francisco. Award-winning photographer and master fisherman, Francis A. Gallela was kind enough to donate the photos in this article for your viewing pleasure. The photo above is of a gathering of eagles on the edge of the Homer Spit, Homer, Alaska. The inset is the master fisherman himself, happy with a red salmon, taken from the Karluk River, Kodiak Island, Alaska.

On a dreary, late fall evening in 1963, when I was 26 years old and barely one month removed from my New York City roots, I wandered into a now extinct downtown San Francisco singles bar called Extension 21. Feeling lonely, somewhat homesick, and a little forlorn, I was just about to leave after downing my second gin and tonic when HE walked in with three of his unidentified cronies.

I was as awestruck as any 10-year-old boy at being in the presence of the man I immediately recognized as Joe DiMaggio, the Yankee Clipper, one of my childhood heroes. He was 49 at the time, and exactly as I would have imagined. With his regal bearing, tall and slender frame, perfectly coifed silver hair and beautifully tailored clothes, he looked like he just stepped off the cover of *Gentlemen's Quarterly* magazine.

Ordinarily, I'm a gregarious individual who is not at all bashful about approaching strangers, even if they are celebrities. But there was something about this dignified, aloof man that kept me glued to my barstool. To attempt to initiate a conversation with this larger than life American icon seemed completely inappropriate, even though he sat no more than five feet away from me. So I sublimated my hero worship with an occasional furtive glance cast in his direction.

As I was feeling inundated by the endless hackneyed cliches used to describe DiMaggio in all of the eulogies offered up in the electronic and printed media following his death last February at age 84, it became clear that Americans were mourning for their lost innocence as much as they mourned his passing.

Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel beautifully articulated America's lament for her lost heroes in their 1967 song, "Mrs. Robinson"

*Where have you gone, Joe DiMaggio?
A nation turns its lonely eyes to you,
woo, woo, woo
What's that you say, Mrs. Robinson,
Joltin' Joe has left and gone away,
hey, hey, hey*

Those of us who came of age in the years following World War II swallowed whole the idealized image of America that was portrayed in movies like *It's a Wonderful Life* and *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*. We liked to see ourselves as a nation of Jimmy Stewarts - average, well-meaning people who believed in an America where honorable



An Ode to Joe D.

Alan Mills laments the passing of an era and venerates a great American hero, Joe DiMaggio

intentions always triumphed over the forces of evil. We never doubted that we lived up to the ideals expressed in the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, the Gettysburg Address and etched on the Statue of Liberty.

Rarely - if ever - did we question the whitewashed version of American history we were spoon-fed in our expurgated school textbooks. Racism was something peculiar to the eleven Southern states, we thought. If you were white and middle-class, you wholeheartedly believed that America was the land of opportunity, where any poor boy could grow up to become president. Words like injustice, exploitation, and imperialism were not part of our vocabulary; or at least they did not apply to the United States.

For the hordes of European immigrants who escaped poverty and political and/or religious persecution in their homelands, America did deliver on its promises. Their dreams of upward mobility were realized,

and they were able to get good jobs, purchase homes and educate their children.

Unlike our later misguided military ventures, America's participation in World War II was in fact a noble undertaking. We had no choice but to confront the scourge of Nazism and fascism. I fondly remember attending a series of block parties celebrating the end of the war, a phenomenon that occurred throughout the nation.

The post-World War II decade was an unparalleled era of peace and prosperity for Americans. As a nation, our collective pride and self-confidence flourished in a way that it probably never will again.

Television shows like *Ozzie and Harriet* and *Leave it to Beaver* became the prototype for the ideal American family - with a mom who reveled in her role as mother and housewife, a caring dad who was the solid breadwinner, and two attractive, mischievous, but always respectful, children. The clan was housed in a ranch-style, suburban home surrounded by the proverbial white picket fence. The word "dysfunctional" was never uttered.

We treated our athletic heroes with deference, and their feet of clay were not exposed by a prying, ubiquitous media. It is in this context that the phenomenon that was Joe DiMaggio must be viewed. He belonged to the era that predated free agency, before lawyers and agents came on the sporting scene, and before we became jaded and cynical.

Joltin' Joe handled success and fame with so much class and dignity; he richly deserved the adulation he received. Compare the way he comported himself in public with the juvenile and bizarre antics of Dennis Rodman.

Ernest Hemingway paid tribute to DiMaggio by using him as a symbol for grace under pressure in his novel *The Old Man and the Sea*. Hemingway wrote, "I would like to take the great DiMaggio fishing," the old man said. "They say his father was a fisherman. Maybe he was as poor as we are and would understand."

San Francisco Chronicle columnist Ken Garcia eloquently captured the essence of DiMaggio with these words, "His humble background seemed to capture the spirit of an era when heroes walked quietly, almost dismissive of their own achievements."

Rest in peace, Joe D. We'll miss you more than you'll ever know.

BOAT PEOPLE: ENDANGERED SPECIES?

MICHAEL KUSHNER TAKES A LOOK AT A SUBTLE AND BEAUTIFUL COMMUNITY IN THE HEART OF SAN FRANCISCO THAT IS ON THE VERGE OF EXTINCTION ... IS THIS A GOOD THING?

At Mission Creek, the last remnant of what was truly Mission Bay, a few lucky water lovers have been living in a quiet secluded hamlet on houseboats; away, but no too far, from the traffic and consumer mentality of downtown San Francisco. But the fifty residents of the 21 floating homes behind the locked gates, gangways and natural moat of Mission Creek are geographically in the center of a upcoming immense development project, headed by Catellus Development Corp., the second biggest private developer in the nation.

THEN

The low din of the continuous flow of traffic from the sixth street freeway exit is disrupted every hour, on the hour, by the roar of the train whistle leaving from the Caltrans railroad station. All of this is mixed with a verity birdcalls making the area seem like a wild urban jungle. The magic of this place is in the salt air, in its natural isolation and in the friendly atmosphere enjoyed by this small community of internally-socializing neighbors living along the docks in their unique lifestyle. Just seeing the creek is like looking back into San Francisco history.

The coastal mudflats in the two hundred foot wide channel is the remains of marshlands that extended to Mission Dolores in the early 1800s. An underground river still feeds into Mission Creek from Twin Peaks.

It supports sixty species of indigenous birds including great egrets, great blue herons and pelicans. Before the Goldrush, the native Ohlone Indians lived in the Mission Creek area and fed off abalone, mussels, berries and onions. Tanneries, lumber mills and hay mills lined both banks all the way to the long bridge (now third

street) - the only way over the wetlands in the 1880s.

Some of the biggest "steam schooner" shipbuilders on the Pacific produced specialized cargo carriers for wood and fruit at the turn of the century. Cows grazed on the isolated island of Potrero Hill, just south of Sixteenth Street until landfill changed the topography. Gunboats were sent to settle disputes between Mexican settlers, homesteaders, squatters and the city's real estate bosses when new acreage was created by the landfill act of 1872.

Now

Some houseboats are on floating pontoons and the more recent additions are built on cement foundations, tube-like pylons which are sunken in the ground and are used as basements. The pylons add



Twenty-one houseboats line Mission Creek – the remnants of what was once the Mission Bay Marshlands

stability yet still rise with the tide. In fact the whole pier, dock and gangway floats with the ebbs and change as much as ten feet. A seawall, to act as a barrier reef, was constructed in 1983 to protect South Harbor and the inlet from the bay's turbulent wakes. Of the twenty lived-on houseboats, only one has kept its motor capabilities and can be moved under its own power. The original residents were transplanted in 1950 from Islais Creek and consisted of mostly maritime sailors and fishermen.

Now it mostly blue-collar professionals with children, and some artists.

Most homes on the water are heated by propane with some wood stoves and most have large skylights for light and heat. Some are elaborate three-story luxury dwellings with cantilevered bedrooms and full dining rooms and a few are simple one-story log cabins with one big room and a loft. Most residents have views of the Bay Bridge and downtown from their decks and portholes.

They all have electricity and telephones and it is a daily routine for several creek dwellers to be working on their floating homes. There is always something to fix or upgrade because of the nature of living on the water. Everyone has back-up generators for emergencies. The residents share materials, advice and volunteer labor for each other in a family-type atmosphere. Adults and children commonly gather at the Boatclub for social events.

The Mission Creek Association has built a public park on the southern bank with funding from donations via memorial plaques for foliage and dedicated benches from benefactors in honor of loved ones, resources from the Bay Conservation Commission and their own money with the city putting in matching grant money. The shoreline was just a parking lot before it was beautified by the residents. They built the park by hand - planting, placing the watering system, the maintenance and pathways. Clean drinking water and port-a-potties facilities are available to

the occasional traveler and the

many homeless who have taken refuge in the outlands. Also provided is a public debris box to discourage illegal and ugly litter and trash. Still, they are constantly cleaning up after disrespectful transients.

In addition to the houseboats, here are 40 more berths containing sea-going vessels. Some are famous redesigned or converted boats with their own history and some boats are useless hulks, left abandoned in the water to rot and sink.

The Project

The new concrete and asphalt Mission Bay, planned in the 303-acre industrial wasteland starts on King Street in the north, Mariposa street in the south, stretches East all the way to the bay, and extends its western perimeter along the present route of the tracks along Seventh Street. This is the largest undeveloped space left in the city, and Catellus has been methodically taking over parcels of land in the area for over fifteen years: buying abandoned city property, buying the auctioned-off Southern Pacific and Western Railroad land, acquiring the lots left vacant after the Embarcadero freeway was torn down, and some acquiring warehouses and parking lots deteriorating and unused. They plan to partner with The city's redevelopment agency and the University of California to build over 6100 housing units, one million square feet of retail space, five mil-



A model of the proposed construction at Mission Creek is on display for public viewing at Catellus Headquarters

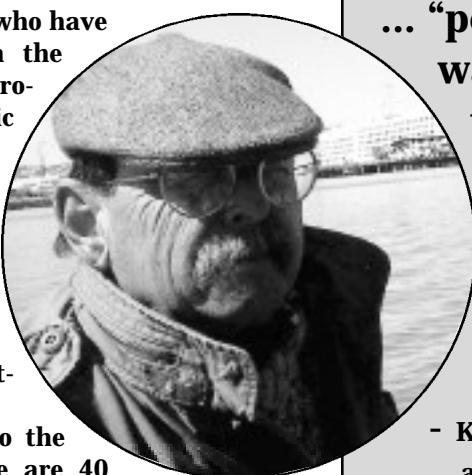
lion square feet of office space, two luxury hotels, several public parks, a 43-acre privatized University Of California Biotech complex including a life science campus, several public schools and add land fill to the bay to create more open space. 47 acres of public space will mostly be around the perimeters of the complex in the form of tree lined pedestrian walkways. A complete architectural plan is available for public viewing in an elaborate display at Catellus corporate headquarters on Channel Street between Sixth and Forth.

PacBell Park, the S.F. Giants' new stadium now being built one block away on Third Street and along the channel, is another site whose completion will surely impact the 2000 foot long dock, it's dwellers and their lifestyle just by the shear numbers of vehicles it will bring. O'Connell was quite critical, "Forty thousand fans will bring auto congestion and oil pollution. I'm not sure they fully thought through the immense environmental impact when they planned it. And besides, it's kind of silly to put it in China Basin, where the wind blows strongly all the time. I thought that's why they moved the field, because of the wind problem at Candlestick. The way it faces is wrong, the shape will act like a scoop for a wind tunnel." Only five thousand parking spots are planned to accommodate the fans.

Houseboat residents have worried that this gigantic project will destroy the creek habitat and their small community's quality of life. Public meetings have been held and activists - a handful of concerned citizens from environmental groups, community organization and representatives from the Mission Creek Association - have made their concerns heard; Catellus appears to have made concessions.

Mission Creek dweller Bob Isaacson has campaigned for years to protect the winged wildlife from encroaching developers. He said he can't stand by and give up a piece of Mission Bay's fading beauty. "There is a precious natural quality of the place that is about to be trashed," he said. He has lived at the harbor on Channel and Sixth for twenty years. He fears that the dense development will drive out the remaining rare waterfowl from the tidal lagoon.

Catellus promises to relocate and enhance the mudflats to try to create environmental balance by planting native cordgrass and pickleweed while trying not to lose too many birds. Jack Davis, the harbor master and creek resident of twenty years was a member of the citizens advisory committee recommending rejuvenating the mudbanks for foraging birds. He recommended installing perch pilings for the birds to rest. Davis has stopped actively complaining



... "people would want to live in the neighborhood with the best weather in the city once they discover it."

- Kevin O'Connell,
assistant harbor master

about the development's encroachments and doesn't want to be known as a muckraker, but it's obvious the development is still on his mind. "Peace and quiet will be gone from this place soon," he said.

Catellus has also offered to build its own on-site separator, treating storm water and sewage in a system designed to not burden The Southeast Treatment Plant. The Southeast Treatment Plant handles 80 percent of the city's total sewage and has already let combined flow into the bay just from the quantity of water it's called on to separate now.

Environmentalists and Mission Creek residents say they're encouraged by Catellus's pledge to reduce pollution of the bay and preserve the creek's natural habitat. The Alliance for a Clean Waterfront, an activist coalition that has been instrumental in pushing for safeguards in this project, is celebrating the agreement. Jeff Marmer, an Alliance member with The Coalition for Better Wastewater Solutions, called it, "an historic compromise."

Bob Whaley is happy with the way Catellus has cleaned up the neighborhood. "Since they've been here, the police have [had] a greater presence and have chased away the rift-raft, the criminals and the drug dealers that habitually and routinely infested the Channel Drive," Whaley said. "I like being in a community of people who all have made their choice to live here. No one [here] has been



There is constant work to be done on the boats at Mission Creek

forced by circumstance or desperation to move into a living situation they don't like. Everyone [here] supports and enjoys this lifestyle."

Kevin O'Connell, assistant harbor master, said it is inevitable that the quality of life in this secret little town which he has inhabited for twenty years will change. He can understand why "people would want to live in the neighborhood with the best weather in the city once they discover it." He notes with regret that "beach people usually don't have as much respect for the water as boatpeople. We live on [Mission Creek] everyday and have a special relationship with the water." Looking at the clarity of the tidal beds he said, "the water quality has improved since we inhabited the creek. I'm not sure it will stay like this for long."

Debra Wessel, a resident of 17 years, is glad that civilization is finally being brought to their area. "We've been surrounded by emptiness out in the middle of nowhere for a long time. I'm happy there will soon be stores and entertainment facilities within walking distance."

Beth Kamieniecki, a resident for eight years, is an avid bird-watcher and has kept seasonal counts for the Audobon Society. "Pelicans rest here in winter on the way north, snowy egrets feed at night off the iridescent anchovies and smelt and this year some very rare Kingfishers have nested and bred on the creek." She feels the enhancement of mudflats will keep the birds coming.

Corinne Woods has lived on the creek since 1985 and has been part of the city-appointed group, which has pushed to require sensibility in the planning of the development. She feels their input was considered fairly and is satisfied with the concessions and additions Catellus has promised to consider. "You can't just throw rocks and concrete on everything and expect everyone to remain quiet. I feel the process has respected our voices in an open attempt to solicit our needs." She insists that the architects have held open forums with two-dozen community groups, church leaders, housing advocates and environmental organizations. She still wishes that the new buildings would be set further back on the banks. The boatpeople have twenty more years left on a thirty year lease with the Port Commission and feel the project will probably take that long to complete. They feel safe, at least until then.

The city is kicking in \$140 million in revenue bonds for sidewalks, lighting and other infrastructure improvements, such as extending the number 22 MUNI line, but the corporation is private and the city has failed to get full accountability and disclosure from their partners. According to Terry Francke, executive director of the California First Amendment Coalition, "Not being subject to outside overseeing will make it impossible for the public to find out the true worth and profit it is to Catellus and whether the deal is really good for the city."

The deal was given the go-ahead in February and pre-construction test pilings are scheduled to be driven in June. Yet many questions still remain: "Are activists giving the project a go-ahead on empty promises? Will the boatpeople still be allowed to keep their homes after the project is complete? Will the 41,000 new employees that the project brings to the area respect the solitude and privacy the creek dwellers have cultivated? Will the birds be happy in the small remaining natural habitat? Only time will tell.



Oh Mr. Klein ... Your Underwear is Showing

OCTAVIA KURANSKY

takes a look at the state of advertising – the silly and the serious

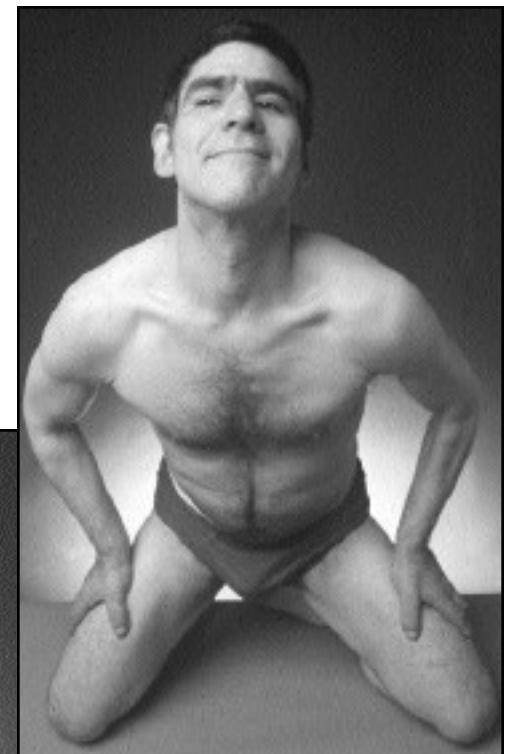
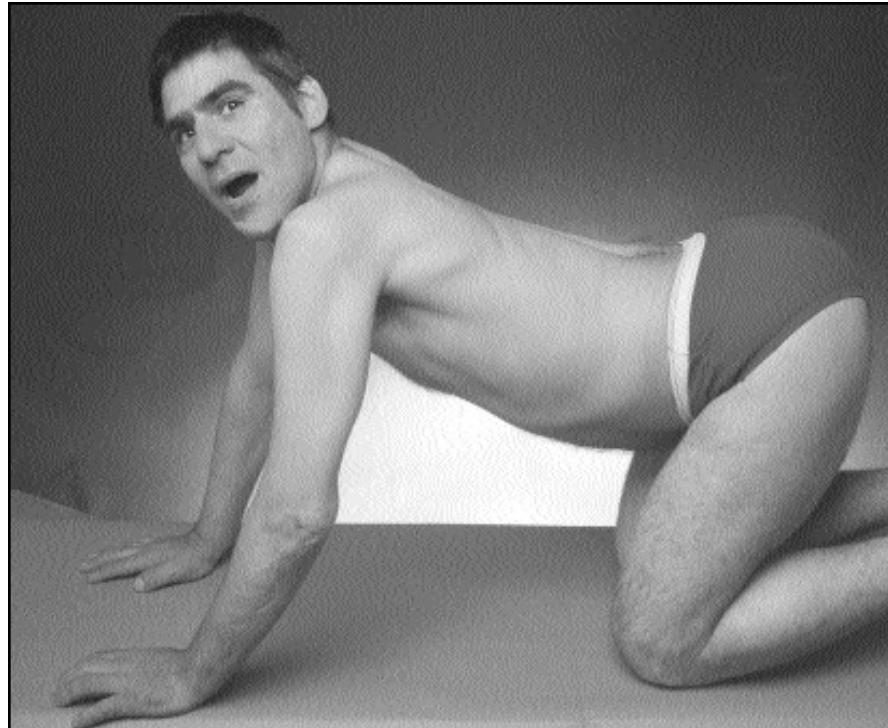
Last year clothing mogul Calvin Klein was brought to heel, again, under pressure by a group of consumer watchdogs, and convinced to forego the release of an advertising campaign featuring young children in their underwear.

Apparently even the CK emblem was not enough to cover what was missing. CK and company acquiesced because, as the company said, they had no wish to offend the sensibilities of anyone. We are business people, they said, and as advertising is a business decision, it would be a bad business decision to continue with this series of ads in the face of such obvious displeasure on the part of the consumer.

This of course is not the first time, nor will it be the last, that advertising has messed with somebody's comfort zone and had to be revised or recalled. Mostly this is okay with companies - the public attention given the bad campaign is just as welcome as the public relations from the planned and ostensibly favorable attention. In the advertising world, attention is attention. Originally, and probably at its best, advertising was meant to call attention to the merits of a useful and necessary product. It was very direct. The first commercials were shouted by merchants as they made their way down the street.

Ice, milk, medicines and pots and pans rattled along behind the vendor. Some of the more creative peddlers made up little songs about what they had to sell and folks several blocks away came to recognize a tune even if they were too far away to recognize the words much the way anybody now knows "Iiiiiiiiiii am every day pee pul!" is about owning a Toyota and nothing else. If the nature of the business required a permanent

Why can't Calvin Klein ads feature real people, like Mike here? Or at least feature adults? – Ed.



Photos by
Shinya Aizawa

structure to house it, some business owners would station hawkers at the front entrance of the establishment with instructions to approach passers-by with the intent of bringing them in and hopefully making customers of them once inside.

The modern day marquee used to be a wood sign or shingle with an icon showing the service offered within. In Rome, the undertaker's sign depicted a naked boy and a coffin. In the United States, it was the red and white stripe of the barber's pole and the ubiquitous three gold balls that marked the front door to the financial assistance of the pawnbroker. Benjamin Franklin, Paul Revere and George Washington (yes, that George Washington) - all good businessmen - were advertisers as well as consumers; running ads for land, false teeth, and in the case of Franklin, a whole host of his inventions. As early as 1759, critics took notice of the often artful handling of language with regard to advertising and took special note of the



lack of specifics with regard to the product. Said another prominent citizen of that day, Samuel Johnson, "... to these masters of the public ear, whether they do not sometimes play too wantonly with our passions." (A common complaint today even.)

One cannot help but notice in the popular Volkswagen Passat commercial that, although it is apparent we will enjoy driving this little car and feel real cool with its ability to put us in sync with the neighborhood vibes, the ad spot tells us nothing about the car. Manufacturers used to give a passing nod at the product by flashing 23 mpg (that's

miles per gallon remember?) or some such, but not anymore. The only hold outs in car advertising that come to mind are the now aging Saab commercials on public television which show shots of crash dummies and speak briefly of shoulder holsters and safety doors in the event of a crash.

So advertising has not changed that much from Franklin and Washington's time to the ads of today. Early ads mentioned little about the product, whereas today there is no mention of the product - not a huge move. Moreover, a perusal of ads from Franklin and Washington's time reveal an abundance of promises, an improvement not just for the condition addressed by the product but a enhanced personal life and with a little luck (not promised) more romance. An early ad for skin soap said, "... for skin as white as Virginia snow, as thin as fine porcelain (dissolve a bit in warm water and use to progress the bowels for sweet breath). Others will wonder at your natural beauty." Later promises to women had to do with making her the best wife if she served Wonder Bread for dinner, the best Mom if she had her carpets cleaned by a Hoover and an irresistible vamp if she wore Cachet perfume. Men have always had to spend a little more, their representative icons being a little more expensive - like cars.

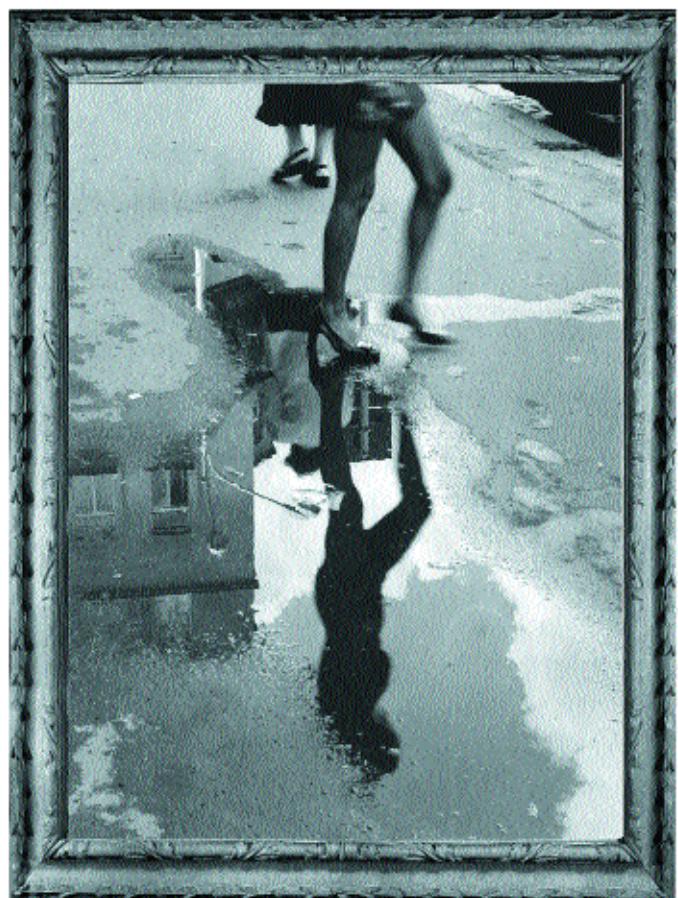
Now of course, the bar is considerably higher. Women have many more roles than mother or housekeeper and men have many more roles than breadwinner for the family. This means there are many more items to buy to maintain all these roles, and advertising has to, well, advertise that. To distinguish themselves from the competition some advertisers rely on sex and violence. And then somebody has to say something about that and remind them of what they're selling. In the case of Calvin Klein - underwear.

etc.

THE GALLERY



Chihaya Kaminokawa



Nate Cohen



Chihaya Kaminokawa



Shunka Toyama



Chihaya Kaminokawa

etc.



men don't know how to relate as their only insight into western women is from the movies. They think we are all like the loose models they see in magazines. The porno industry has not helped our plight at all. Japanese men here either stare too long or run in the opposite direction. Either way, I know that they assume that because I am a Western woman I am highly sexed and aggressive to boot. The women are much friendlier towards me. Again, I acknowledge the fact that if I spoke fluent Japanese my life may be a bit easier however my motivation to study fluctuates depending on my attitude towards Japanese society.

What are some of the bonuses of your lifestyle and some of the drawbacks?

The bonuses are definitely getting to explore my creativity. There is a hands-on arts center just twenty minutes from here that keeps me sane. The photographic opportunities here are superb. Also positive is having a surplus of cash in my wallet for shopping and travel. The drawbacks would be feeling confined at times, not having a very regular social life (there are days where I have complete isolation from other Westerners and this can be a bit lonely), and the "introspectiveness" that comes from this.



Blackmore talking to her students in the classroom.

Any advice to offer entrepreneurial Western women wanting to work in the quieter regions of Japan?

Be prepared for a variety of responses. Some locals offer me cheery smiles as I cycle by while others ignore me. Children smile and wave thinking you might be a movie star. Be prepared to not blend in. There is no escape from how you look and people are going to point at you. I have heard that some English teachers in the countryside have nervous breakdowns, as coming here stirs up many inner feelings of grief. Be prepared to be alone and to see the real you.

With feelings of loneliness and your love life has taking a dive, why do you stay?

I recently renewed my contract with this school for another year, which brings the final day up to July 2000. This would be two years in total and would allow me to pay off all of my student debt in New Zealand. I don't want to stay any longer, as I will be ready to leap into the real world again by then - to speak my mother tongue, to be more social. While there are many a lonely moment here in Nojiri-cho, I feel that if you can survive an experience of isolation and loneliness, it creates a stronger sense of self, leading to personal growth and personal development. There is a phrase frequently used in Japanese, "ganbatte" - this suggests, chin up, be strong, good luck and fight. Some students have said this to me if I look sad or tired. I'm really trying to live this though. Loneliness and isolation, although they may sound negative in connotation, actually shed clarity of mind and heart. This is proving to be an insightful time for me. Having said that, if things get really bad, I will bail.



Blackmore at a farewell dinner with grade three junior high students (age 15-16). The student to her right used to say "I love you, Joanna." The peace or victory sign is a common pose in Japan